

Physical Activity & Nutrition Tips for Parents¹



Fact Sheet

Physical Activity

- **Set limits on sedentary time.** One-half hour to one hour per day of television time is plenty.
- **Plan kid-oriented activities for the whole family,** such as hiking, skiing, walking the dog, and swimming.
- **Ensure that your child reaches adulthood with an individual sport or activity that he or she enjoys, such as swimming, running, golf, or tennis.** Enroll your child in intramural sports and recreational activities that fit your budget and time constraints. Then make them a priority!

Nutrition

- **Insist on breakfast.** Life-long weight management comes easier to those who eat breakfast.
- **Establish a general structure around meal and snack times, and allow eating only at these times.** Most young children need three meals and two snacks per day, but by the age of eight, three meals and an afternoon snack are plenty. Offer water, fruits and vegetables if kids are still hungry in between eating times.
- **Limit eating and snacking to a certain area of the home,** such as the dining room or kitchen. Discourage grazing in front of the television or computer.
- **Save soda, punch, and flavored waters for special occasions.**
- **Eat meals as a family as often as possible.** Sit down and enjoy each other's company. Kids will learn the social pleasures of eating well.
- **Find alternatives to rewarding or bribing kids with food.** Instead, try stickers, hugs, and small toys, or simply say, "You did a great job!"

Be an Example

- **Encourage the idea that healthy eating habits and regular physical activity can benefit everyone in the family.** Avoid using judgmental language about body shapes and sizes. **Be gentle and persistent in your efforts to show good health options to kids.**
- **Be an advocate for your child's health.** Check with your child's school to see if there is adequate physical education and recess time. Ask teachers to provide non-food rewards. At middle and senior high schools, note what kinds of food choices exist in the cafeteria and vending machines. **You can make a difference!**



¹ Source: Julie Metos, RD, Primary Children's Hospital.